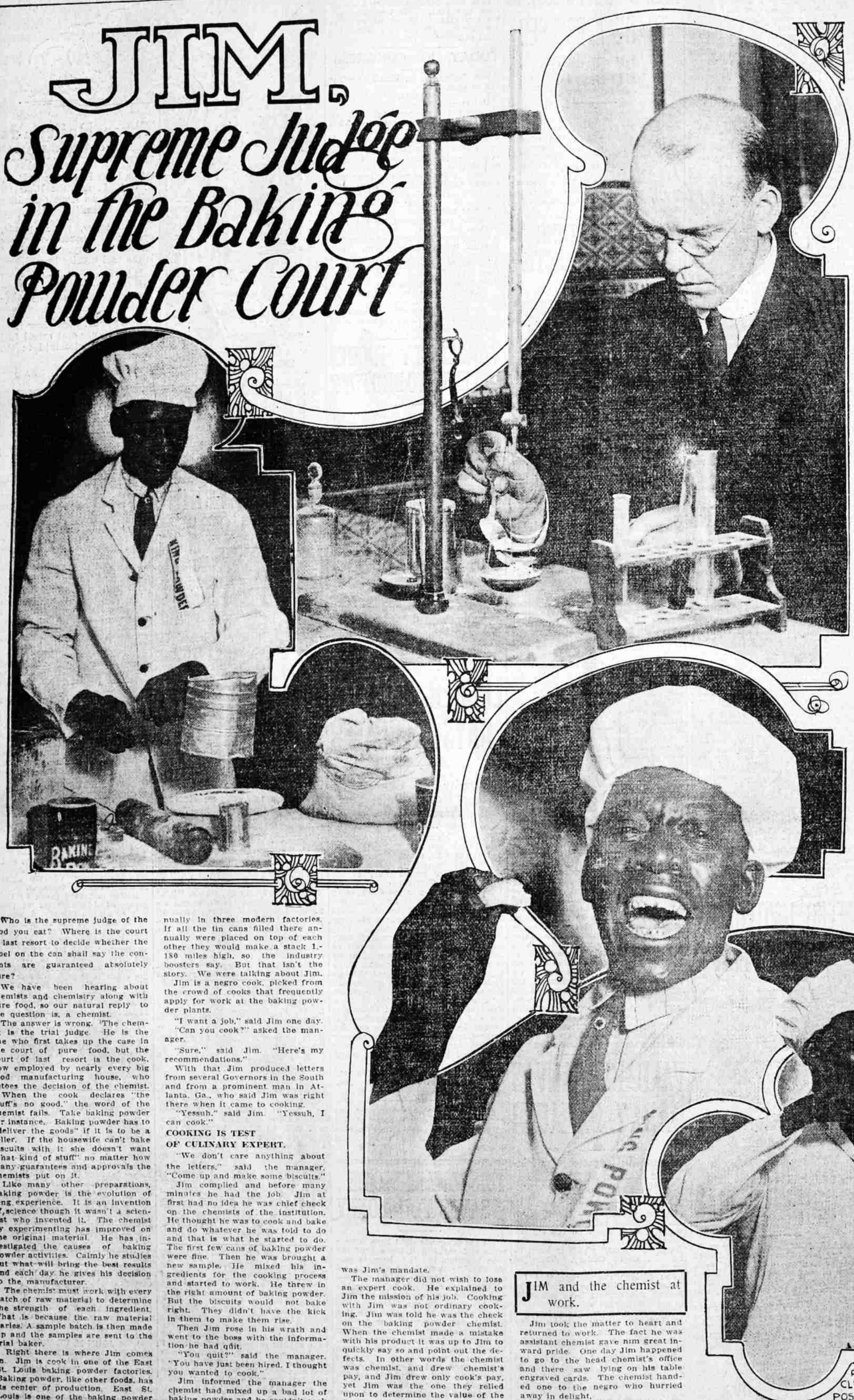
JIM, Supreme Judge in the Baking Powder Court



Who is the supreme judge of the food you eat? Where is the court of last resort to decide whether the label on the can shall say the contents are guaranteed absolutely pure?

We have been hearing about chemists and chemistry along with pure food, so our natural reply to the question is, a chemist.

The answer is wrong. The chemist is the trial judge. He is the one who first takes up the case in the court of pure food, but the court of last resort is the cook, now employed by nearly every big food manufacturing house, who vetoes the decision of the chemist.

When the cook declares "the stuff's no good," the word of the chemist fails. Take baking powder for instance. Baking powder has to "deliver the goods" if it is to be a seller. If the housewife can't bake biscuits with it she doesn't want "that kind of stuff" no matter how many guarantees and approvals the chemists put on it.

Like many other preparations, baking powder is the evolution of long experience. It is an invention of science though it wasn't a scientist who invented it. The chemist by experimenting has improved on the original material. He has investigated the causes of baking powder activities. Calmly he studies out what will bring the best results and each day he gives his decision to the manufacturer.

The chemist must work with every batch of raw material to determine the strength of each ingredient. That is because the raw material varies. A sample batch is then made up and the samples are sent to the trial baker.

Right there is where Jim comes in. Jim is cook in one of the East St. Louis baking powder factories. Baking powder, like other foods, has its center of production. East St. Louis is one of the baking powder production centers. There 15,000,000 pounds is produced annually in three modern factories. If all the tin cans filled there annually were placed on top of each other they would make a stack 1,180 miles high, so the industry boosters say. But that isn't the story. We were talking about Jim.

Jim is a negro cook, picked from the crowd of cooks that frequently apply for work at the baking powder plants.

"I want a job," said Jim one day.

"Can you cook?" asked the manager.

"Sure," said Jim. "Here's my recommendations."

With that Jim produced letters from several Governors in the South and from a prominent man in Atlanta, Ga., who said Jim was right there when it came to cooking.

"Yessuh," said Jim. "Yessuh, I can cook."

COOKING IS TEST OF CULINARY EXPERT.

"We don't care anything about the letters," said the manager. "Come up and make some biscuits."

Jim complied and before many minutes he had the job. Jim at first had no idea he was chief check on the chemists of the institution. He thought he was to cook and bake and do whatever he was told to do and that is what he started to do. The first few cans of baking powder were fine. Then he was brought a new sample. He mixed his ingredients for the cooking process and started to work. He threw in the right amount of baking powder. But the biscuits would not bake right. They didn't have the kick in them to make them rise.

Then Jim rose in his wrath and went to the boss with the information he had qdit.

"You quit?" said the manager. "You have just been hired. I thought you wanted to cook."

Jim informed the manager the chemist had mixed up a bad lot of baking powder and he couldn't cook with it.

"Gib me real powdah if I cook," was Jim's mandate.

The manager did not wish to lose an expert cook. He explained to Jim the mission of his job. Cooking with Jim was not ordinary cooking. Jim was told he was the check on the baking powder chemist. When the chemist made a mistake with his product it was up to Jim to quickly say so and point out the defects. In other words the chemist was chemist, and drew chemist's pay, and Jim drew only cook's pay, yet Jim was the one they relied upon to determine the value of the baking powder.

"In other words you are assistant chemist," said the manager.

JIM and the chemist at work.

Jim took the matter to heart and returned to work. The fact he was assistant chemist gave him great inward pride. One day Jim happened to go to the head chemist's office and there saw lying on his table engraved cards. The chemist handed one to the negro who hurried away in delight.

Then the chemist resigned and a new one was appointed to his place. By order of succession Jim became head chemist, in his own mind. He went to a printing shop and ordered cards printed. He showed the sample and said he wanted the cards to be of the same quality only he wanted his own name engraved in bigger type, "Bon Bon Jim, head chemist."

These cards he distributed among the colored gentlemen of his acquaintance to let them know their own inferiority. He also gave them lectures on the greatness of the baking powder business and the highness of his calling.

He told them man couldn't live a single day without baking powder and that they could not have baking powder without Jim, head chemist. And Jim made a big impression on his fellows. Besides that Jim is about right. In the baking powder business as in every other food producing or cooking accessory manufacturing concern they have to have such men as Jim to make the final tests.

The production of food and cooking accessories is not the same process in vogue a few years ago. Everything is reduced to the machinery and scientific basis. As everybody knows machinery turns out most of our food. In all sanitary plants the product is not touched by hand in the process of preparation. Machinery does the work. Man stands beside the machine and directs its labor.

MACHINERY MAKES CLEANER OUTPUT.

Cleaner output is guaranteed by machinery. When hands do not touch the food there is no possibility of germs entering the product. In the manufacture of coffee, for example, the most sanitary methods are in vogue in all modern plants. Coffee is brought to American roasting houses and is unloaded from the sack into hoppers. It is washed to get out any impurities, which may have been imparted to it in the tropics. When it is thoroughly cleansed it is sent through all its processes. Ground coffee for example is first roasted and then ground, passing from one machine to another on machine driven conveyors.

When it comes to the boxes for packing it drops through a tube into a box. A mechanical weighing machine shuts off the flow of coffee when the desired quantity—usually a pound—is reached. Automatic sealers close the top of the box.

As in the manufacture of baking powder, a chemist or expert of some kind determines the amount of different coffees to put together to make a particular brand. The blending of coffee requires constant care because the coffee from different shipments, though it come from the same port, may have different strength.

But as in the case of the baking powder, there is a Jim to make the final decision. He is the official taster. His business is to taste every mixture of coffee to see if it is coming out right. If it is not right he sends back an order for a different mixture. Like Jim, he is the final court. He is the supreme judge in the coffee business. As long as his job lasts he can veto the president of the company if he desires.

The housewife is a discriminating buyer. If the product she buys is inferior she quickly spurns it. Ask her what baking powder she is using and she will tell right away that it is the best. Of all the different products of manufacture in the food line baking powder is the most exacting. Vary the ingredients by a hair's breadth from the established standard in the making, and when it is used in cooking the biscuits will not raise. The raw material is subjected to the most rigid tests. The chemist puts all his brains to work to make the best possible combination.

Every ingredient is put through a series of test tube analyses to find just what its strength may be before it is submitted to the man who runs the oven.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CLINT MURPHY, JR. ESPECIALLY POSED AT GRANT'S BON BON BAKING POWDER CO.

Chemist's Decision Overruled by Biscuits of Cook, Whose Results Prove Much More Effective Than Laboratory Analysis

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Angus McTavish was a Lowlander, rich, and thoroughly Scotch. He had never seen the Highlands or the beautiful lakes of Scotland, except from a long distance.

He paid a visit to America, and in New York was shown all the sights. However, he was not impressed, and still thought the Lowlands of Scotland far superior. As a final attempt to show Angus something that would impress him, his friends took him to Niagara Falls. Angus looked at them critically, and, when asked if he did not think them the most marvelous thing he had ever seen, he remarked:

"Aye, mon, they are grand! But do ye ken the aul peacock in Dumfries that had the wooden leg?"

THOMAS. A. EDISON TELLS OF ADVANCE IN MECHANICAL DEVICES, WHICH LESSEN THE LABOR OF ALL PERSONS

Thomas A. Edison is one of the world's most difficult men to interview. He is always "too busy." The New York Independent found him at leisure by submitting a list of questions which Mr. Edison answered at his leisure. The questions and answers follow:

What is the trend of invention?

Application of electricity to all moving things.

The most significant invention of 1913? Manufacture of ammonia from nitrogen and hydrogen.

What work of your own during the last year is most important? Perfection of the recording of music by the new disc phonograph.

What of the flying machine? Don't know.

What of setting off explosives by wireless? It has been of no value, except for military murder.

Is radium to be harnessed? It's driving a clock in Paris. Radium, so far, has only a scientific value. No one can predict. There are enormous possibilities.

What of new sources of power? Sun engines of considerable power, twenty to thirty horsepower, are working in Africa and Arizona. There are many inventors working on the problem. Burning coal at the mouth of the mine, converting the power into electricity, and transmitting the power over long distances, has already been put into effect in Nova Scotia and in England. Forming producer gas by setting the vein of coal on fire and using the gas in gas engines has not to my knowledge been applied. It is, in my opinion, possible, especially when coal advances in price. The smaller and deeper veins, from which it is impossible to extract the coal without great expense, could be worked in this way. The available coal in these veins is enormous. Tapping internal heat of the earth is out of the question until coal gets more expensive.

How soon will ships be driven by new power? Until we find a practical method of converting combustible matter directly into electricity, steamboats will continue to be driven by steam and internal combustion motors.

Is communication with possible inhabitants of other worlds in sight? Have no opinion.

Are not social machines displacing individual machines; e. g., the public laundry against the domestic washing machine? The individual washing machine will hold its own for awhile. Electric driven washing machinery suitable for the small house is rapidly coming into use, and the labor is reduced almost to nothing.

Does not invention follow social opportunity and need; cannot society now ordain its inventions? Society is never prepared to receive any invention. Every new thing is resisted, and it takes years for the inventor to get people to listen to him and years more before it can be introduced, and when it is introduced our beautiful laws and court procedure are used by predatory commercialism to ruin the inventor. They don't leave him even enough to start a new invention.

Might not a staff of governmental inventors profitably work on safeguard machinery? * * * It does not need a government staff of inventors to invent devices to prevent people getting killed by machinery; it wants plain, unmistakable laws on the subject and a commission to see the laws carried out.

Do you agree with Roger W. Babson that capital and labor are irreconcilable foes? * * * There should be no irreconcilability between capital and labor. It's between capital dishonestly acquired and labor. Labor is not well informed and hence it classes all capital alike. The fruits of one generation of labor become the capital of the next generation.

Has not invention put it in the power of labor, or any small group of those discontented with present conditions, to checkmate, if not wreck, our civilization? * * * We shall always have this trouble until our school system discards traditionary methods of teaching the child and turns out young men thoroughly familiar with their natural environment and with a capacity for sound thinking.